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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Honorable John Raymond Tunheim
Chairman
Assassination Records
Review Board
600 E. Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Dear Judge Tunheim:

(C) I have just received informal word of the decisions the JFK Board made at its 17 November 1997 meeting. Most of the Board's decisions--those relating to the CIA presence in Warrenton, CIA's involvement in various non-governmental organizations, and the details of CIA funding of the Cuban Revolutionary Council--are very welcome. I must, however, urge the Board to reconsider its decision to release documents in a form that would reveal the Agency's use of State Department cover.

(C) We stand behind the position that we have presented in writing and in discussions with the Board on previous occasions. I would welcome an opportunity to have a senior CIA representative meet with the Board at your convenience to explain why the Agency considers this information so sensitive and to answer any questions you may have. Meanwhile, I offer the following summary of our fundamental concerns.

(S) Effective official cover is necessary to enable our officers to work overseas in often hostile and volatile environments. Official cover also enables the Agency to conduct its business with allied liaison services in countries where host governments would find it politically unacceptable to acknowledge a cooperative relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency. In all such settings, State Department cover is critically important because its use affords our officers the rights and privileges set forth in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic and Consular Immunity--diplomatic immunity, in particular. Indeed, the effectiveness of the Agency's use of State Department cover

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clearly illustrates the purpose behind the Director's statutory obligation to protect intelligence methods from unnecessary and inappropriate disclosure.

(S) No other cover mechanism can provide our officers the operational utility and personal security that State Department cover does. Achieving effective cover requires that our officers be fully integrated into State Department entities, offices, and functions. Our officers are routinely assigned State Department duties to make it harder for hostile services and others who might try to harm or expose our officers to identify them as Agency employees. Official acknowledgment of even the fact of Agency use of State Department cover would increase dramatically the risks that both Agency officers and our State Department colleagues encounter in serving US interests around the world.

(S) State Department cover continues to be an important intelligence method. Its use is undiminished since the 1960s, and it will remain essential for the foreseeable future. I urge the Board to reconsider its recent decision insofar as it concerns the Agency's use of State Department cover. In this regard, we will be forwarding a more comprehensive memorandum addressing the damage issue prior to the next Board meeting, and we would also like to offer the Board the opportunity for a personal appearance by a senior CIA representative should that be appropriate.

Sincerely,

David W. Carey

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